

ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU

COLLEGIATE & YOUNG LEADER DISCUSSION MEET

MANUAL



Revised June 2026

CONTENTS

COMPETITION OVERVIEW
& OBJECTIVES 3

ELIGIBILITY 4

PRIZES..... 5

HELPFUL HINTS FOR
COMPETITORS 6

COMPETITION STRUCTURE 7

COMPETITION FORMAT 8

ROOM LAYOUT 10

SCORING 11

DISCUSSION MEET
SCORING RUBRIC 12

APPENDIX A: TIEBREAKER
OFFICIAL TALLY SHEET..... 14

APPENDIX B: TIEBREAKER
OFFICIAL TALLY SHEET 15



COMPETITION OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

Competition Objectives

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

Background Information

Farm Bureau's strength depends on its members' ability to analyze agricultural issues and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The competition is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each member.

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

- Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
- Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
- Improve the ability to listen.
- Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
- Assist the individual in giving and receiving criticism in a productive way.
- Teach the value of compromise.
- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

A successful competitor is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader. Competitors will assist the group in creating ways to implement solutions and highlight Farm Bureau's involvement in those actions/steps.

The applicants will discuss pre-selected topics using four bases for the general discussion:

- Cooperation
- Constructive Criticism
- Problem Solving
- Communication



For the Young Leader Discussion Meet, the IFB State Young Leader Committee and the IFB Member Engagement department will coordinate the program at the district and state levels.

District winners will compete in the state competition at the IAA Annual Meeting. If IFB is unable to hold the Annual Meeting in-person, the state Discussion Meet will be held virtually. All potential competitors must be made aware of this possibility prior to their entry. In the event of virtual competitions, changes in timing and format of the competitions are likely to be required. State competitors will be advised as soon as possible after the decision is made.

For the Collegiate Discussion Meet, the IFB Member Engagement department will coordinate the program at the state level.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements differ between the Collegiate and Young Leader programs. See the applicable requirements below.

Collegiate Eligibility

- Competitors shall be an active Illinois Farm Bureau member at a recognized Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter or club as established by a state Farm Bureau and between the ages of 18 and 35 at the time of the competition.
- The individual shall have reached his/her 18 birthday at the time of the district contest and shall not have reached his/her 36 birthday by January 31st of when the national competition is held.
- Must be an undergraduate college student in a state with a recognized YF&R program. Undergraduate status is determined at the time the applicant qualifies for the national competition.
- Applicant shall not be enrolled in a graduate-level program at the time of their state competition.
- Must display a sincere interest in the agricultural industry.
- Competitor may compete in the Young Leader AND Collegiate Discussion Meet in the same year; however, they CANNOT be named a State Winner in both in the same year.
- Current member of the IFB State Young Leader Committee are ineligible.
- Past state Collegiate Discussion Meet winners and past state YF&R Discussion Meet winners and/or previous AFBF Discussion Meet competitors are not eligible.
- Current employees or agents of county, state and/or American Farm Bureaus organizations and their affiliates are not eligible. Past employees responsible for implementing YF&R Competitive Events in the past 6 years at the state or national level are ineligible.
- Professional speakers (*those who received a fee, royalty, or honorarium for speaking within 24 months prior to the competition*) are not eligible. Reimbursement for travel or expenses is excluded.

Young Leader Eligibility

- Competitors shall be an active Illinois Farm Bureau member between the ages of 18 and 35 in good standing with their County Farm Bureau in the membership system as of 7 days prior to the district contest.
- The individual shall have reached his/her 18 birthday at the time of the district contest and shall not have reached his/her 36 birthday by January 31st of when the national competition is held.
- Must display a sincere interest in the agricultural industry.
- Competitors may compete in the Discussion Meet AND either the Achievement Award OR Excellence in Agriculture Award in the same year; however, if named State Winner in multiple programs, they may only represent 1 at the national level.
- Current members of the IFB State Young Leader Committee are ineligible.
- Previous Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader Discussion Meet state winners are ineligible.
- Current employees or agents of county, state and/or the American Farm Bureau organizations and their affiliates are ineligible. Past employees responsible for implementing YF&R Competitive Events in the past 6 years at the state or national level are ineligible.
- Professional speakers (*those who received a fee, royalty, or honorarium for speaking within 24 months prior to the IFB State Discussion Meet*) are ineligible. Reimbursement for travel or expenses is excluded.

PRIZES

Prizes are awarded in the Collegiate and Young Leader Discussion Meet programs.

Collegiate Level — State Winner

- \$1,500 Cash, courtesy of GROWMARK, Inc.
- \$200 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau
- Expense-paid trip to represent Illinois in the AFBF YF&R national competition at AFBF YF&R or FUSION Conference.
- Expense-paid trip to represent Illinois in the AFBF YF&R national contest at the AFBF Annual Convention

Collegiate Level — State Runner-Up

- \$150 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau
- Expense-paid trip to attend the AFBF YF&R or FUSION Conference serving as the alternate for the AFBF YF&R national competition.
- Expense-paid trip to represent Illinois in the AFBF YF&R national contest at the AFBF Annual Convention

Collegiate Level — State Honorable Mentions

- \$100 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau
- Award Recognition at IAA Annual Meeting

Young Leader — State Winner

- John Deere Z530R ZTrak™ Mower with 54-in. Deck (or equivalent model) and \$2,000 Cash OR \$8,500 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau & COUNTRY Financial
- \$1,500 Cash, courtesy of GROWMARK, Inc.
- Expense-paid trip to the IAA Annual Meeting
- Expense-paid trip to represent Illinois in the AFBF YF&R national contest at the AFBF Annual Convention
- Complimentary registration and hotel accommodation at the IFB Young Leader Conference
- Expense-paid trip to the AFBF FUSION or YF&R Conference

Young Leader — State Runner-Up

- \$1,500 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau & COUNTRY Financial
- Complimentary registration and hotel accommodations at the AFBF Annual Convention

Young Leader — State Honorable Mentions (2)

- \$200 Cash, courtesy of Illinois Farm Bureau

Young Leader — District Winners

- \$50 FS Gift Card, courtesy of GROWMARK, Inc.
- Expense-paid trip to the IAA Annual Meeting

Note: If any of these events are unable to be held in person, there is no guarantee of an alternative prize. Winners are responsible for any and all applicable taxes.

**All prizes subject to change*

HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPETITORS

The following tips apply to all competitors in both the Collegiate and Young Leader Discussion Meet:

- Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topic. Sources: Internet; library; newspapers; magazines; Farm Bureau policies; county, state and American Farm Bureau publications; and conversations with experts or knowledgeable people.
- Remember this is a **discussion, not a debate**.
- Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions, and urge others to be specific.
- Be aware of the audience, but generally address your fellow competitors. Speak loudly enough to be heard by the whole audience.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- Use the 1-minute of quiet time to organize your closing statement.
- This is not a panel symposium where each participant makes a presentation. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with questions, answers and statements coming from any person at any time. The moderator plays an inactive role during the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in your summary statement.
- The discussion should not be “conversation” or aimless talk, nor should you take the role of a persuasive speaker. Try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques and stay within the time limit.



COMPETITION STRUCTURE

The overall structure of the competition is similar between the Collegiate and Young Leader Discussion Meet Program. The Collegiate program uses 2 opening rounds, with a potential for a Top 10 or Top 16 depending on the number of competitors, followed by a Final Four. The Young Leader program includes district-level competition, then state-level rounds with a Top 16 bracket before the Final Four.

Collegiate Farm Bureau - State Competition

All competitors will compete in 2 opening rounds (Round Robins). A Top 10 or Top 16 competitors will advance for another round of competition under the following conditions:

- Top 10 = If there are between 17 and 23 competitors participating in the competition. The top 2 ranked competitors in each Top 10 room (2 rooms with 5 competitors each) will advance to the Final Four.
- Top 16 = If there are 24 or more competitors participating in the competition, the top ranked competitor in each Top 16 room (4 rooms with 4 competitors each) will advance to the Final Four.

Note: If there are 16 or less competitors competing in the Round Robins, the ranking and scores from those rounds will decide the 4 competitors who advance to the Final Four.

Young Leader – District Level

All competitors compete in 2 rounds. Each round includes room with up to 6 competitors. Contestants are randomly divided with no reference to county.

District advancement to the state competition is based on the total number of competitors per district, regardless of whether it is a single district or multi-district competition:

- 1 participant = Automatically advances
- 2-4 participants = 2 Advance
- 5-9 participants = 3 Advance
- 10+ participants = 4 advance
- One alternate may be named per district

Young Leader - State Competition

All competitors will compete in 2 opening rounds (Round Robins). A Top 10 or Top 16 competitors will advance for another round of competition under the following conditions:

- Top 10 = If there are between 17 and 23 competitors participating in the competition. The top 2 ranked competitors in each Top 10 room (2 rooms with 5 competitors each) will advance to the Final Four.
- Top 16 = If there are 24 or more competitors participating in the competition, the top ranked competitor in each Top 16 room (4 rooms with 4 competitors each) will advance to the Final Four.

Note: If there are 16 or less competitors competing in the Round Robins, the ranking and scores from those rounds will decide the 4 competitors who advance to the Final Four.

COMPETITION FORMAT

The following format applies to all rounds in the Collegiate and Young Leader Discussion Meet competition.

Timing Notifications

Round Robins & Top 10/Top 16

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- Warning at the 20-minute mark of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (*5-Minute Warning – Yellow Card*)
- The end of 25-minute open discussion (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- The end of 1-minute of quiet time (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- The end of each competitor's 1-minute closing statement (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)

Final Four

- The end of each 30-second opening statement (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- Warning at the 25-minute mark of open discussion, holding the card up until all competitors have noted the warning (*5-Minute Warning – Yellow Card*)
- The end of 30-minute open discussion (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- The end of 1-minute of quiet time (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)
- The end of each competitor's 1-minute closing statement (*Time Elapsed – Red Card*)

Competition Flow

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

- State the problem or need.
- Explore, define and understand the problem or need.
- Identify causes of the problem or need.
- Elaborate on all possible alternative solutions.
- Evaluate and compare alternatives.
- Test and project what appears to be the best solution(s).
- Create ways to implement the solution(s) discussed and highlight Farm Bureau's involvement in those actions/steps.



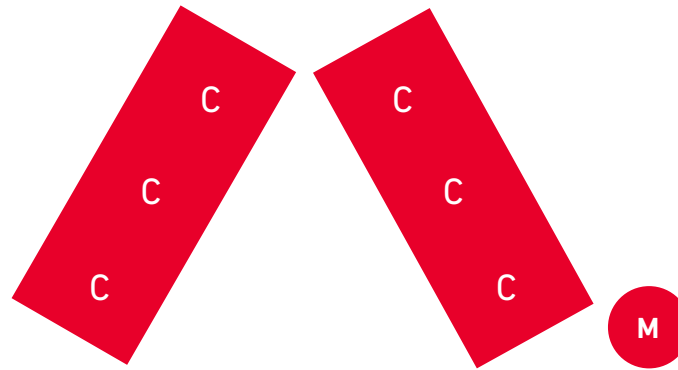
Orientations

- Orientation will be held prior to the opening round of the competition.
- All participants are required to attend; roll call will be taken. At any contest, any participant not present when their name is called during roll call will be automatically disqualified.
- The opening round topic will be announced.
 - The first-round topic will be announced now, and again in the competition room.
 - Each subsequent round topic will be announced at the close of the prior round.
- Opening round room assignments and locations will be distributed.

Competition Structure

1. All competition facilitators and competitors will meet in the pre-assigned competition room prior to the start of the competition to receive last-minute comments by the room chair. At this time, competitors will also draw for order of placement of their name tent. Competitors not present at the time of the drawing will select from the remaining positions.
2. Competitors may NOT take prepared notes in any form and/or any form of technology (smart watches, cell phones, ear buds, etc.) to the competition table. After all competitors have been introduced, notes may be written on paper provided. If a note or a technological device is brought to the table and is noticed by the competition facilitator, there will be a disqualification called at the end of the round by those facilitating the Discussion Meet.
3. The room chair will call the meeting to order, announce the topic to be discussed, and introduce the timekeeper and moderator. Any competitor not present at this time will be disqualified. The roles of room chair, timekeeper, and moderator may be assumed by 1 to 3 people.
4. The moderator will introduce the competitors and re-announce the topic to be discussed. They will give each competitor, in voluntary order, and will have the opportunity to make a 30-second opening statement directed to the audience. The timekeeper will flash a red timecard when 30 seconds have elapsed, and the moderator will announce "time." Competitors are expected to complete their statement in the allotted time.
5. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 25 minutes during the opening rounds and Top 10/Top 16 round and 30 minutes during the Final Four round. The discussion should be directed at fellow competitors. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at any time.
6. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator and competitors with a yellow card when 5 minutes of open discussion remains. The timekeeper will indicate when 25 minutes in the opening round and 30 minutes in the Final Four round have elapsed with a red timecard. The moderator will call for 1 minute of quiet time to allow competitors to compose a closing statement.
7. The moderator will give each of the competitors, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a 1-minute closing statement directed to the audience. The timekeeper will flash a red timecard and the moderator will announce "time" when the 1 minute has elapsed, then when the competitor will need to stop. Competitors are expected to complete their statement in the allotted time.
8. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chair to finalize tabulation on their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chair has collected their tabulated score sheets.
9. The first round topic will be announced at the competitor orientation. Subsequent round topics will be announced at the conclusion of the prior round.
10. The moderator will thank the competitors and may ask competitors to share their personal agricultural and Farm Bureau background with each other and the audience.

ROOM LAYOUT



x J x x x x x x x T x x x x x x x x x
 x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x J x x
 x x x x x x J x x x x x x x x x x x

M = Moderator C = Competitor J = Judge T = Timer x = Audience

The physical arrangements of the Discussion Meet rooms should provide for 2 tables at the front of the room facing each other and the audience. Half the participants should be seated at each table with the moderator on the side. Name cards identifying competitors should be easily visible. Cards should show only the competitor's name, not his or her county. Seating will be determined by a drawing for order prior to the start of the round. Competitors not present at the time of the drawing will select from the remaining positions.

**At some levels of the competition, there is not an audience, therefore judges and the timer will be in a row in front of the competitors.*



SCORING

The room chair will supervise the final tabulation by the judges. Judges will use the point system indicated on the Judges Sheet to assist in selecting the winners. Each judge will total his/her Judges Sheet and rank the competitors. Each judge is to break ties on his/her own score sheet before submitting. The room chair will assist the judges in determining the final ranking of each round and the final competition.

- The winner will be determined by judges' ranking, and ties will be resolved before the judges are dismissed.
 - Ties will be broken at the end of each round by an automatic procedure using Problem Solving and Implementation as the first tiebreaker, followed by Analysis of Topic, and then Cooperative Attitude (see Appendix A).
 - In the event of an unresolvable tie between all 3 categories, total points from the judge's sheets will be used to resolve the tie.
- When possible, the above procedure should be conducted in a private room with only the judges, room chair, and Discussion Meet Chair present.

Total Scoring Breakdown — Both Programs

Category	Points	Tiebreaker
1. Opening Statement	10 pts.	
2. Analysis of Topic or Problem	20 pts.	TB #2
3. Problem Solving and Implementation	25 pts.	TB #1
4. Cooperative Attitude	15 pts.	TB #3
5. Delivery	15 pts.	
6. Closing Statement	15 pts.	
TOTAL	100 pts.	

Collegiate Farm Bureau Feedback

IFB staff will share judges' electronic feedback with competitors after the conclusion of the Collegiate Discussion Meet. Please note that judge feedback is not guaranteed.

Young Leader Feedback

District Contest

Competitors will receive written comments from the judges following the contest.

State Contest

IFB staff will try to share judges' electronic feedback with competitors after Round Robin 2 and the Top 10 or Top 16 round to help them prepare for the next round. Please note that judge feedback is not guaranteed.

DISCUSSION MEET SCORING RUBRIC

Category	Needs Improvement	Developing	Proficient
1. Opening Statement 10 pts	0–3 points - Does not address the problem or is off topic. - Does not address the importance or relevancy of the problem. - Makes a closed statement that does not allow room for further conversation. - Does not seem to have a point of view. - Does not finish in the allotted time.	4–6 points - Defines the problem. - Sets the problem in context. - Makes a statement that leaves some room for further conversation but could be more open. - Has a general point of view. - Stays in the given time.	7–10 points - Clearly defines the problem. - Conveys the importance and relevancy of the problem. - Makes an “open” statement that leaves room for further conversation. - Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with a very clear point of view. - Uses their time very wisely and stays in the given time.
2. Analysis of Topic or Problem 20 pts	0–5 points - Does not address the problem or does not remain on topic/ wanders/distracts. - Hasn’t done much research or lacks quality facts. - Doesn’t build on others’ ideas, only pushes their own. - Doesn’t ask questions to clarify others’ ideas. - Doesn’t share relevant personal examples. - Misinterprets the issue or does not display competency. - Is unaware of FB policy.	6–12 points - Identifies the causes of the problem but does not directly address them; remains on topic. - Has done research. - Addresses ideas of others but does not build upon them. - Asks some questions to help vet ideas of others. - Shares relevant personal examples (may be slightly off topic). - Demonstrates knowledge of this problem but not why it exists. - Is aware of current FB policy.	13–20 points - Identifies and addresses the causes of the problem; remains on topic. - Has thoroughly researched the topic. - Confidently builds on the ideas of others to contribute to a coherent analysis. - Asks relevant questions to vet the ideas of others. - Shares relevant personal examples that add to the conversation. - Helps ensure thorough analysis before moving to problem solving. - Is aware of current and relevant FB policy.
3. Problem Solving & Implementation 25 pts	0–6 points - Instead of helping guide the conversation to a solution, just data drops. - Offers no plan for a solution or a generic plan like “tell our story” or “educate consumers.” - Does not identify how Farm Bureau is involved.	7–16 points - Tries to help lead the conversation to address a solution but misses opportunities to collaborate with the group. - Has a plan but is missing specificity. - Farm Bureau is mentioned but is not a crucial piece of the solution.	17–25 points - Is a leader in guiding the group and the conversation to specific and relevant solutions. - Generates ideas that contribute to an achievable and specific plan of action to resolve the issue. - Clearly defines how Farm Bureau is part of the action plan.
4. Cooperative Attitude 15 pts	0–4 points - Does not listen to others — just waits for their turn to talk. - Cuts others off or simply repeats what others have already said. - Is rude, defensive or combative when they do not agree with others.	5–9 points - Listens to others but does not comment specifically on their ideas or tie ideas back to the bigger conversation. - Is respectful of others. - Is not rude or defensive when they disagree with others.	10–15 points - Is an active listener and comments on or references specific ideas mentioned by others, tying them back to the bigger conversation. - Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants. - Shows integrity especially when they do not agree with others.

Category	Needs Improvement	Developing	Proficient
5. Delivery 15 pts	0–4 points • Is boring/mumbling/monotone. • Slouches, does not use appropriate gestures or have eye contact. • Ideas are difficult to understand, or they are not confident in speaking.	5–9 points • Speaks at an appropriate volume and pace with appropriate tone. • Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact. • Conveys thoughts and viewpoints but could seem overly rehearsed.	10–15 points • Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaks at an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone. • Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact that emit respect and professionalism. • Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly.
6. Closing Statement 15 pts	0–4 points • Does not accurately summarize the conversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable.	5–9 points • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable.	10–15 points • Shows that they have actively listened to the conversation in their summary. • Uses take-away points from the discussion to develop relevant, realistic and specific action items and plans for the future. • Closing statement is memorable and inspires confidence in their ability to work toward a solution.

APPENDIX A: TIEBREAKER — OFFICIAL TALLY SHEET (EXAMPLE WITH TIE)

The following example demonstrates the tiebreaker process when competitors are tied in the final ranking. The process is identical for both the Collegiate and Young Leader programs.

Competitors: Final Ranking

In Seating Order	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Total	Final Rank
Brutus Buckeye	1	2	1	4	1
Herbie Husker	2	3	2	7	
Goldy Gopher	3	1	3	7	
Nittany Nellie	4	4	4	12	4

**You have a 1st and 4th place, but a tie for 2nd — move to Tiebreaker #1.*

Tiebreaker #1 — Problem Solving and Implementation

In Seating Order	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Total	Final Rank
Brutus Buckeye	1	2	1	4	1
Herbie Husker	2	3	2	7	
Goldy Gopher	3	1	3	7	
Nittany Nellie	4	4	4	12	4

**You still have a tie — move to Tiebreaker #2.*

Tiebreaker #2 — Analysis of Topic

In Seating Order	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Total	Final Rank
Brutus Buckeye	1	2	1	4	1
Herbie Husker	3	1	3	7	
Goldy Gopher	2	3	2	7	
Nittany Nellie	4	4	4	12	4

**You still have a tie — move to Tiebreaker #3.*

Tiebreaker #3 — Cooperative Attitude

In Seating Order	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge	Total	Final Rank
Brutus Buckeye	2	1	1	4	1
Herbie Husker	1	2	3	6	2
Goldy Gopher	3	3	2	8	3
Nittany Nellie	4	4	4	12	4

**With no ties, there is a final rank. You now have 2nd and 3rd place. Remember: rankings that are clear in the first box do not ever change, even if they would fall from that rank in one of the tiebreaker boxes.*

APPENDIX B: TIEBREAKER — OFFICIAL TALLY SHEET (EXAMPLE WITHOUT TIE)

The following example demonstrates that when a clear ranking exists from the initial tabulation, tiebreakers are not needed, though the full form should still be completed.

Competitors: Final Ranking

In Seating Order	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Total	Final Rank
Clark Kent	2	3	2	7	2
Peter Parker	3	2	4	9	3
Bruce Wayne	1	1	1	3	1
Tony Stark	4	4	3	11	4

**Technically, you do not need to go any further since you have a clear rank, but please fill out the entire form.*

